

# Tobacco Cessation & the Oral Health Community



## The Problem

Only 8% of tobacco users in Whatcom County were advised to quit by their dentist. (2003 Whatcom County BRFSS)

## A Solution

Provide the Whatcom County oral health community with Basic Tobacco Intervention Skills to effectively help their patients quit using tobacco. In June 2005, the Whatcom County Health Department Tobacco Prevention Program hosted BTIS training for local oral health professionals.

In preparation for the BTIS training I met with Diane Lowry of the Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition. The coalition provided insight into the oral health community that we would have never known about. Diane wrote a letter of support for the training, which was included with registration materials that were sent to each dentist, dental hygienist and dental assistant in Whatcom County. The coalition even recommended a day for the event, Friday, which is traditionally the day most dental clinics are closed.

With assistance from the Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition the training was approved to award four hours of dental continuing education credits. Dental professionals traditionally have an easier time acquiring CEU's than other groups because they keep track of their trainings and submit proof at a later time. All we had to do was provide each participant with a certificate of attendance that stated the topic, the number of hours/credits (1 hour=1 credit), the date, the presenter, and my signature.

Twenty-three oral health professionals attended the June BTIS training. Participants represented private practices and community clinics, half of trainees were from SeaMar and Interfaith Community clinics. This was very encouraging since both clinics provided service to low-income or uninsured individuals who have higher rates of tobacco use and tooth decay.

Local physician and anti-tobacco advocate, Dr. Chris Covert-Bowlds, led the trainings. It was the first training that Chris instructed oral health professionals and he was delighted with how much information the participants provided him about the impact tobacco has on oral health. It was a win-win situation where both the teacher and the student had a positive experience.

Upon completion of the training, participants received certificates and tobacco prevention and cessation posters to take back to their office. Participants were provided order forms for second-hand smoke education and tobacco cessation materials that are available through the Health Department's Tobacco Prevention Program. Sample materials were available to view and everyone was encouraged to fill out order forms before they left. Each and every participant requested materials for their office! Materials were delivered several weeks later and their enthusiasm from the trainings was still apparent. This training showed great community interest and we will continue to offer them in the future. I continue to get calls from folks who were unable to attend the event and want to make sure I include them for the next training.

The event was a success and a positive partnership between the Tobacco Prevention Program and the oral health community has been established. Participants from the first training have become our anti-tobacco oral health champions.

## Lessons Learned

- **PARTNER WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONAL COALITIONS!**
- **Provide Continuing Education Credits to ALL health professionals**
- **Provide resources that participants can use to help their patients quit using tobacco**
- **Send out registration early**
- **Plan events/trainings with a health professional's input**

## Building on Success

### The Opportunities Ahead

## Tobacco Prevention & Control 2005 Annual Conference

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